

# FAITH & FORM

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This U.S. Air Force chapel in Charleston, South Carolina, designed by Glick Boehm and Associates, won a recent design award (see "Notes & Comments," page 6). Photo: Rion Rizzo/Creative Sources

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## Notes & Comments

### *An Exhibition in Tribute*

The building that once housed a synagogue in University City, Missouri, is now a thriving art center where children discover their art talents and adults enjoy lectures and exhibits. Most are not aware that they are in a building of international importance. B'nai Amoona synagogue was designed by Eric Mendelsohn and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Born in Russia and new to the United States, Mendelsohn envisioned a truly modern approach to synagogue architecture that would express the spirit of the age. Unfortunately (or fortunately), the congregation grew in the steady westward movement from the city to the outlying suburbs and a new synagogue was built (Gyo Obata). But Mendelsohn's building has taken on a new life and an important exhibit, "Architect of Form and Spirit: Eric Mendelsohn in St. Louis," which opened September 17 and will continue to March 10, 2001. Stephen Leet, Associate Professor of Architecture, Washington University, St. Louis has designed the exhibit. Telephone: 314-725-6555.



*New Center of Contemporary Arts, formerly B'nai Amoona Synagogue, University City, Mo., designed by Eric Mendelsohn.*

### *The Architect and Liturgy*

An exhibit of Luis Barragan's (1902-1988) work entitled "The Quiet Revolution" has been traveling from Vienna and European cities to London and Tokyo. In the exhibit are three robes for Roman Catholic priests designed by Barragan, the architect.

### *A Long Awaited Event*

The largest cathedral in the Orthodox world (Moscow) stands on the site of an earlier cathedral constructed in the late 1800s to commemorate the victory over Napoleon. In the early 1930s, Stalin destroyed the cathedral, but in the early 1990s plans to reconstruct the original building were drawn up. Over 1,000 workers worked around the clock for four years. This year the consecration of Christ the Savior cathedral was held.

### *New Synagogues for Germany*

These synagogues are being built to accommodate an influx of Eastern European Jews into Germany. How do you design a meaningful synagogue in the land of the Holocaust? Abstract modern designs are coming to the fore as a way to provide for comfortable worship, while using symbols and metaphors to preserve the context of history. Alfred Jacoby, a Frankfurt architect who has designed several of the new synagogues, said, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

### *The Church Building of the Future?*

Thomas Bandy, in writing for the newsletter *The Cutting Edge* (Disciples of Christ), describes the future church as in need of these features:

- Symbolism, vision, and missions. The accumulation of artifacts that have outlived their usefulness should be severely restricted.
- Multiple options supported by up-to-date technologies. Church facilities will be oriented around The Worship Center, a Conversation Court and a Child Care Center.
- Personal security, safety and accessibility.



## The Real Estate Market

Leaders of religious institutions have been facing the difficulty of finding buildings that lend themselves, intact or through renovation, to the particular needs of their congregations. Finding land on which to build is even more difficult. This problem is accentuated, of course, in larger cities where it has become a source of frustration.

## Fundamental Differences

In Karen Armstrong's new book, *The Battle for God*, she argues that fundamentalism is an adaptation, not a throwback, and that rather than rejecting modernism, fundamentalists are insisting on the implications of their scriptural premises. She narrates the history of Judaism and Islam, as well as Christianity, showing that there are important distinctions among fundamentalists. Karen Armstrong, a Roman Catholic nun for several years now, teaches in a rabbinical college in London and last year won an award from Britain's Muslim Public Affairs Council.

## The Emerald Necklace

Boston is bringing back the original sculpted woodlands that architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed in 1887. The multi-million dollar effort will halt years of erosion, shore up 19th century stonework and rediscover grown-over gems of plant and tree species.

## An Unusual Feature

The Stations of the Cross traditionally are found on the walls of churches, but in the Oratory Church at St. Boniface in Brooklyn, N.Y., they are made of carved glass, embedded on the floor, and lighted from below. Each of the four layers is carved with a different element of the picture to give it depth and dimension. The 14 stations form a pathway to and from the sanctuary (Swanke Hayden Connell, Architects; Kasindorf Carved Glass).



Detail of a Station of the Cross, St. Boniface, Brooklyn

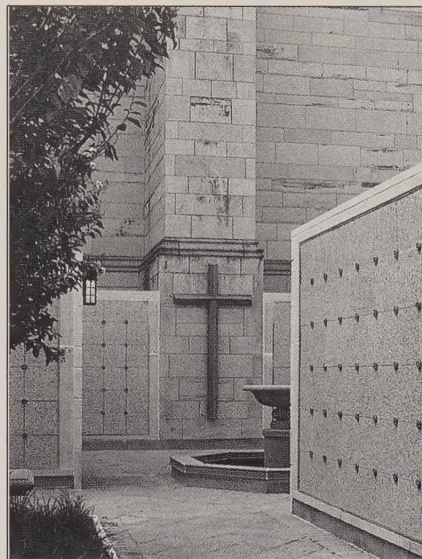
## An Unexpected Application

Two local leaders of the pagan community in Greenfield, Massachusetts, were recently accepted in the Franklin County Interfaith Council. One was a Wiscan priest and the other a priestess in the Celtic Fairy Tradition. They are part of a growing nationwide movement for recognition and acceptance of pagan sects.

## A Good Decision

The Rev. Richard F. Grein, Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of New York applauds New York City Council's decision to award one million dollars toward the rehabilitation of Eldridge Street Synagogue. "Religious buildings are as much a part of the rich fabric of New York as are our skyscrapers, bridges, schools, museums, etc. Let us hope that this initiative paves the way for a city program that does not exclude architecturally and historically significant buildings simply because they are owned by religious organizations.

(Continued on next page)



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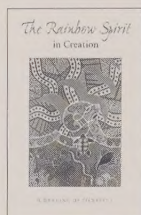
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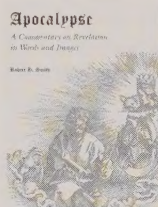
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## Notes & Comments *(continued)*

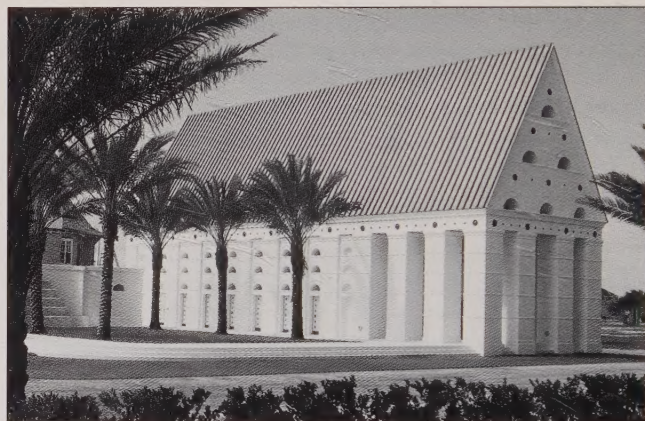
### Stone for the Final Window

David Ivey, Israeli ambassador to the U.S., donated a stone from near the Western Wall in Jerusalem to the Washington Cathedral to be placed in the last of its 215 stained glass windows. The final window was designed by Rowan LaCompte and depicts the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people.

### Mounting Difficulties With Zoning Laws

- Neighbors object and protest more new religious buildings
- Some cities refuse permits to use existing non-religious buildings for religious purposes
- Multiple restrictions made as well as efforts to influence style and design
- Ban against services held in a residence

### New Church for New Urbanism



Windsor Church, Vero Beach, Florida.

This is the first church to be designed and built in the New Urbanism planned community of Windsor, Vero Beach, Florida. The church was designed by the European architect Leon Krier, with Scott Merrill of Vero Beach. A non-denominational place of worship, it was designed to be the spiritual and architectural focal point for the community.

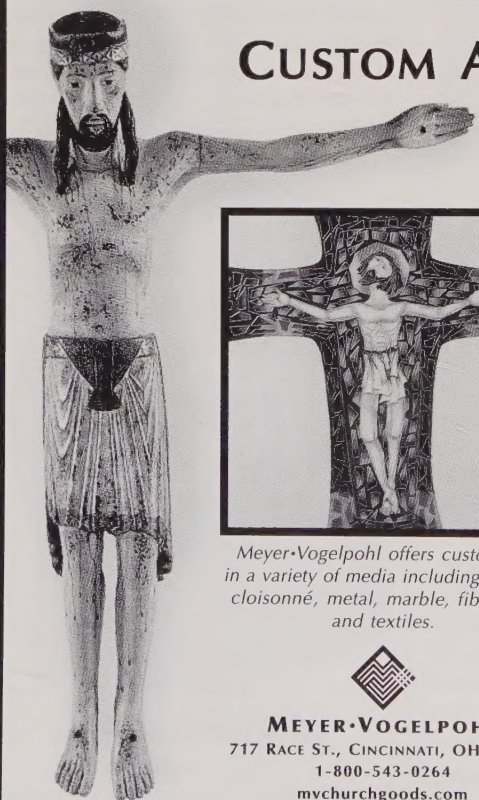
### The Air Force Chapel in Charleston, S.C.

A new Base chapel (cover) for the Air Force, designed by Gary Boehm, principal of Glick Boehm and Associates, received the Air Mobility Command Design Award. Creative Sources Photography, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia, contributed outstanding photography.

### IFRAA in Montreal

IFRAA will sponsor a tour of Montreal's sacred spaces this spring, April 20-21, 2001. The tour, "Liturgical Elements," will explore religious facilities as well as artisans' workshops to determine what elements constitute sacred space. Special discounted rates at the Hotel Renaissance du Parc have been arranged. Information: Kristi Graves, Project Manager, Professional Practice, AIA, 202-626-7544; ifraa@aia.org. □

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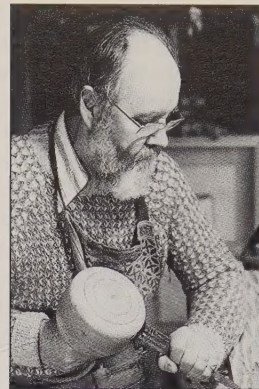
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# SPIRITUALITY AND THE ARTS

By Edward Robinson



I would like to look at the concept of spirituality, not so much with the purpose of offering a definition, but rather to explore in practical terms what part it can play in human life. To see it in action, we must also look at religion and find what relation it has to spirituality. Can there, for example, be spirituality without religion, or religion without spirituality?

Then we must examine the work of art, and ask how far the growth of spirituality depends on human creativity, and whether the creative imagination can flourish independently of any spiritual source.

## Spirituality

Our human nature has many different facets.

We are physical creatures: we have physicality.

We are intellectual creatures: we have intellectuality.

We are sexual creatures: we have sexuality.

We are spiritual creatures: we have spirituality.

These are just four aspects of our humanity. The first three we seem to share with other species; spirituality appears to be confined to our own. It is, it

seems, the one specifically human characteristic. It is what makes us human.

Spirituality would seem to have something to do with spirit, an element resistant to definition.

I suggest that "spirit" in question must be something that transcends humanity; that what makes us human is our capacity to be aware of, to relate to, something that is more than human.

*Spirituality, as I see it, is universal. I say "is," but it is more of a potential to be realized than an observable fact. It is a gift that can be accepted; it is also a gift that can be refused.*

To those born and brought up in the Christian tradition, it is natural to think of the Holy Spirit, a concept that immediately raises all kinds of questions and controversies.

What we are dealing with here is a mystery beyond all definition or formulation. We must surely look for some valid conception beyond our own religious culture; a culture that has too often in the past assumed imperialistic attitudes in this regard.

When I speak about the Spirit, then, and spirituality as an openness, a receptivity to the Spirit, I shall, I hope, be understood not just by Christians, but by all those of whatever tradition who recognize that ours is a spiritual species, that we share a common potential for

spirituality.

Some, I know, will disagree with this and insist that there is a distinctive Christian spirituality, a Buddhist spirituality, and so forth. Fair enough. This is one way of using the term. But it is not mine. I am more concerned with what unites us than what divides us.

Spirituality, as I see it, is universal. I say "is," but it is more of a potential to be realized than an observable fact. It is a gift that can be accepted; it is also a gift that can be refused. It is closely tied with human choice, human freedom.

This comes straight out of the Christian Gospel (John 16). In his last conversation with his disciples, Jesus speaks of the Spirit. The Spirit which would be available to them would be a support. Spirituality, then, should be understood as a power to be realized, to be activated, and potentially a source of energy that can permeate the whole of life.

This Spirit, then, to which we can be open is essentially creative; it can enable us to become what we have it in ourselves to be. As the old hymn invoked, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Creativity is offered to us, for the discovery of our own essential humanity as a species; and also of our own individuality, of what makes each of us a unique human being.

Spirituality, though, is not to be understood simply in individual terms. Its realization is not to be achieved in isolation, in insulation from our fellow human beings. It has to be shared, communicated. It is not just an awareness of wholeness; it must involve us in becoming a part of the whole.

This is how religion emerges.

## Religion

Religion plays a vital role in the growth of spirituality. Starting with the insights of their founders, and learning from their

EDWARD ROBINSON, retired faculty member of Manchester College, Oxford, England, and author of *The Language of Mystery*, is a sculptor in wood and has been especially interested in the triptych. He has completed two for the village church in Tarnawce, Poland, and one in Southwardk Cathedral in memory of his brother, Bishop John T. Robinson. He also carved the altar for the Kirkridge Conference Center in Pennsylvania. Because he has used woods from tropical forests, he feels he has a debt to repay and does small carvings to raise funds for the rejuvenation of forests in various parts of the world.



openness to the Creative Spirit (the mark of all true spirituality), religions enable the spiritual life to grow and be shared in a common way of life.

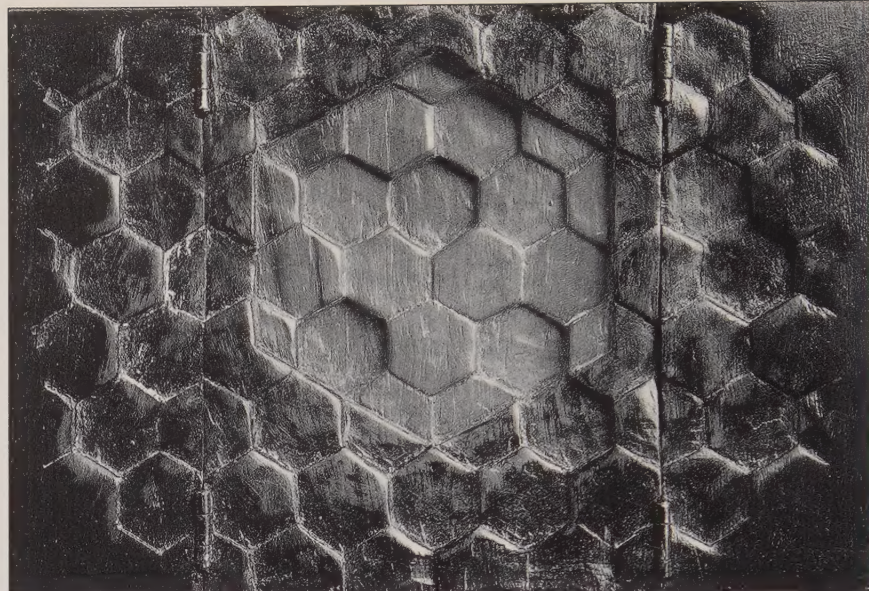
Paradoxically, however, the means by which they do this may inhibit the growth of spirituality. Religions teach; they have doctrines. They even develop techniques or so-called spiritual exercises. But orthodoxy of any kind has its dangers, particularly in a literate culture. The forms in which the truths of orthodoxy are expressed may easily become formulas, clichés that may be learned without spiritual effort. The result may be a fabricated theology, taught by a professional clergy claiming authority for the correct transmission of the tradition. Such authority may save those who accept it the trouble of re-inventing the wheel, but I believe it is something that each of us, on his or her own spiritual journey, must do for themselves. No one can do it for us. The faithful may come to love their religion and there is nothing wrong with that. Unless their religion becomes a prized possession offering the hope of permanence. In the spiritual life, possessiveness can only lead to idolatry.

But what about those whose religion has become their religion?

Such idolatry confuses means and ends; it accepts the sacred for the Holy. No religion is more than a means. No teaching, no liturgy, no art is ever good enough. All must be seen as inadequate in the face of the Holy: disposable, biogradable, moriar ne moriar. Here lies the paradox of the spiritual life. Unless the grain falls into the ground and dies, there can be no new life.

Can religions survive without spirituality? Of course they can. We see examples all over the world, in every tradition, and frightening they are, too. Why do politicians talk today about civil rights? They didn't a hundred years ago. Man's inhumanity to man is everywhere increasing. No religious tradition seems able to do anything about this. In fact, religion seems frequently to be the cause of the bitterest conflicts, the most enduring passions. But if spirituality is the essential, the distinguishing element of our humanity, and if religions have lost touch with this nuclear core of spiritual energy, what else can we expect? Corruption optimi pessima. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?

What happens to a religion that is more concerned with survival than with readiness to die? The Latin word super-



DEREK MARTYN

Edward Robinson's "Resurrection LI." Iroko. 1997.

stitio may give us a clue. Superstitio meant a survival from the past. We use the same word: a superstition is such a survival, and one that we no longer believe in.

These reflections may seem rather hard on religion. I do not mean to be judgmental. It should be noted that, just as I see spirituality in potential terms—it is up to us whether it is realized or not—I see the same with religion. I have only pointed out what may happen, not what necessarily does. Religion is capable of lifting humanity to the most exalted heights we are capable of reaching; but it also may be the cause of disastrous degradation.

A religion is, in fact, no more than a means, a mode. And God is beyond all modes. Jesus himself told his followers that he must leave them; they must let go of him; otherwise they would not receive the Spirit that would guide them to all truth.

If religion can survive without spirituality, can spirituality survive without religion? Clearly a lot of people believe it can. One has only to look at the back pages of today's many "New Age" publications. The range of offered alternatives is practically infinite: courses, venters, communities, projects, gurus. I will not say that these are illusionary; for some they may be the way. A way is only a way. It is not an end. Jesus said that he was the way. Spirituality, then, is perhaps the most vital part of our common human nature. But it cannot grow; at least it has a hard time growing in isolation. It needs

sharing, it needs communication and that communication is in itself mysterious.

### The Arts

In the early stages of any culture, the stages which we sometimes presume to call primitive, no distinction appears between religion and art. All religious ceremonies and activities take the form of art: in liturgy, drama, imagery, music, etc. There are no words to distinguish either religion or art.

Indeed, religion needs the arts if it is to keep spirituality alive. One of the great temptations of religion is to believe that it can give an objective answer to the question: What is the meaning of life? It claims that religion can help us make sense of life. The spiritual search, on the other hand, tells us that this is never possible. Life as life has no meaning. But my life and your life is another matter. At the personal level there is an infinity of meaning to be discovered. But that meaning will always be beyond reason; it may well appear as absurd—but it is all the more convincing for that.

A religion permeated by spirituality should always be asking us, enabling us to believe the unbelievable, to conceive the unconceivable; to imagine the unimaginable. The mysteries of the spiritual life can only be seen as anomalies. When we try to describe them they appear as contradictions, problems to be solved, and so eliminated. If we are to see them for what they are, to celebrate them, they require a language of their own; the



image of the imagination.

It is, of course, too simple to identify the creative imagination with the Holy Spirit and claim divine sanction for all human creativity. There are forces of evil as well as forces of good in the spiritual world. We can, however, see the creative imagination as the human faculty by which the Creator Spiritus can be invoked, whether consciously or not. The artist must avoid pure self-indulgence, the spiritual equivalent of alcoholism. The best of art should change the way we experience the world, enhance our understanding and our enjoyment of life. It should bring something new into the world.

### Creation As Gift

I should like to end where I began, with the need to understand true spirituality as an openness to the Creative Spirit. Perhaps artists may no longer invoke the Muses as the source of their inspiration, but I believe that it is still their common experience that their art has an element of gift in it. Something is given, something that just comes. Or maybe not, of course. It may be that the harder one tries, the less willing it is to come. If we

*Spirituality is perhaps the most vital part of our common human nature. But it cannot grow; at least it has a hard time growing in isolation. It needs sharing, it needs communication and that communication is in itself mysterious.*

are to receive the gift, the receptivity, the readiness to receive is all. Frustration, whether from human error or some resistance to the material, may produce the most unpredictable, the most magical gifts of all—if only one is open enough to recognize and welcome them.

But having established that true spirituality has a creative element in it, it would be the greatest mistake to con-

clude that the highest examples of the spiritual life are to be found in the lives of those whom we call "artists." Coomaraswamy's well-known saying, that "the artist is not a special kind of person, but everyone is a special kind of artist" should reassure us that there can be no such thing as a spiritual elite. The creative imagination is a natural faculty common to us all. It is universal. And the "work of art" is not just the end product of his or her skill. This is just the beginning of the creative process. It is for us to continue the process by discovering for ourselves what the work of the artist, the poet, the composer, has to give us—a gift that may be a world away from what the artist, the poet, originally conceived.

The artist, said Paul Klee, is merely the trunk of the tree through which the forces of creation are transmitted from their mysterious, unseen origins in the roots: those forces which—no one knows how—will give life to the leaves, the flowers, the fruit. So the work of art requires us all to participate in it, and that participation can help to keep that work alive, to keep bringing out more of its infinite potential. In this way the work of art and the work of spirituality are one. □

"Saint Francis and Twelve Doves"  
35" x 27" x 12"  
capture in bronze  
the spirit of love  
and ascension

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# OUTSIDE THE PALE: FAY JONES

By Betty H. Meyer

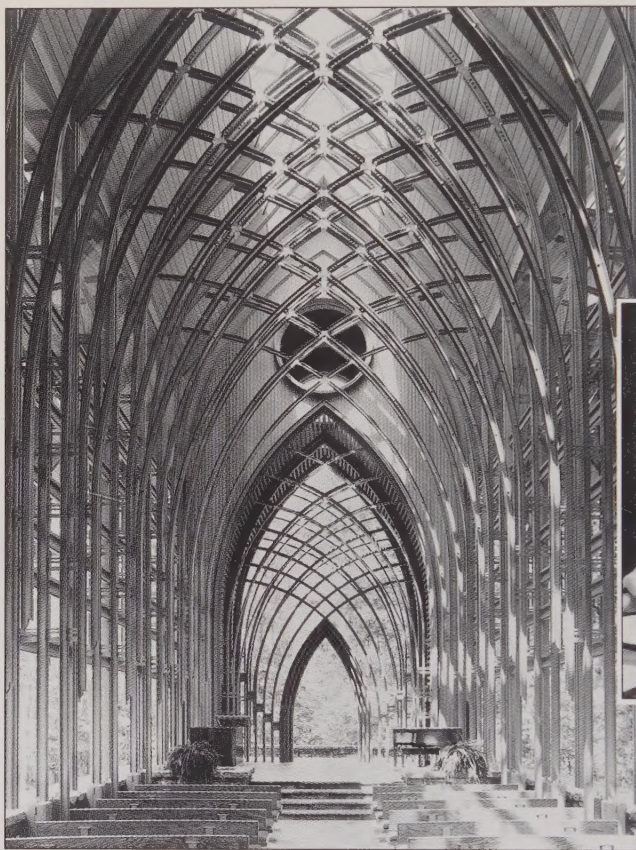


No one appreciates the celebrated work of architect Fay Jones more than his home state of Arkansas. The exhibit "Outside the Pale" in the Old State House Museum in Little Rock is the culmination of efforts of three of its agencies and many individuals to pay tribute to a favorite son. The exhibit will be available for travel, as Jones' admirers are represented across the U.S.

"As early as I can remember," the architect says, "I liked to paint and draw but I liked to build things also." He credits a movie on Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson's Wax Building in Racine, Wisconsin, as an epiphany that made him conscious of art and architecture coming together as an art form, and that made him certain that architecture was to be his profession.

After two to three years in engineering at the University of Arkansas and a stint in the Navy, he returned to enroll in the newly formed Department of Architecture, whose new Fine Arts Building was designed by Edward Durell Stone. In 1994, he met Frank Lloyd Wright (the story of this meeting is delightfully told in the catalog, "Outside the Pale," published by the Department of Arkansas Heritage). From 1949-1953, respectively, Jones taught at Rice University and the University of Oklahoma, which gave him an opportunity to develop a friendship

BETTY H. MEYER is editor of *Faith & Form*. Along with the "Outside the Pale" catalog, NICHOLAS D. DAVIS, FAIA, Auburn, Alabama, helped provide information for this article.



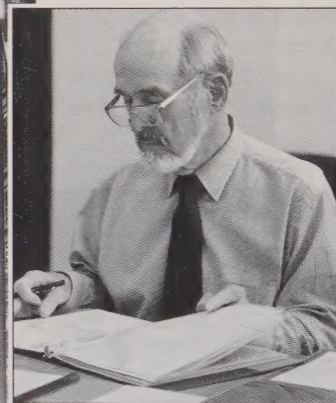
Architects attending the AIA convention in Philadelphia this year were asked to select their favorites from a rarefied listing of 10. Members were also invited to cast their votes online. E. Fay Jones' Thorncrowne Chapel (above) was among the top 10; the residence Fallingwater received the most votes.

with Bruce Goff, whose practice was in Norman, Oklahoma. It was after a summer in Taliesin that he began teaching in 1953 at the University of Arkansas and became professor emeritus in 1988, with the firm continuing as Maurice Jennings and David McKee, Architects.

Fay Jones believes that "every man should have a place where he can have communion with himself and his surroundings...and that place should be his home." He has designed many resi-

dences that do just that.

Robert Ivy, Jr., editor of *Architectural Record*, describes the sensitivity of Fay Jones as enabling the design of Thorncrowne Chapel, which served as a springboard to his national fame in 1980 and Chap-



JAMES GRAHAM

Fay Jones

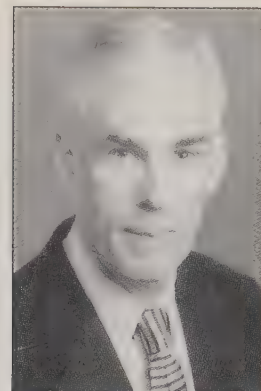
man University Chapel in Orange, California, and Cooper Chapel in Columbia, Ky. That earned him the 1990 AIA Gold Medal for a Lifetime Achievement Award.

As Robert Ivy has written, "Fay Jones' architecture begins in order and ends in mystery. His role can perhaps be best understood as a mediator, a human consciousness that has arisen from the Arkansas soul and scoured the cosmos, then spoken through the voices of stone and wood, steel and glass. Art, philosophy, craft, and human aspiration coalesce in his masterworks, transformed from acts of will into harmonies: Jones lets space sing." We salute Fay Jones! □



# A SPIRITUAL PATH LEADS TO A SACRED PLACE

By James F. Williamson, AIA



In ancient times the manner of approach to a sacred site, ritualized as a spiritual journey, was as much a part of the worship experience as the rites held at the final destination, the temple. One sees this most dramatically, perhaps, at Delphi in Greece, where the pilgrimage to the temple of Apollo began at the sea, progressed upwards through a deep gorge, culminating at last with a winding procession up a switch-back avenue punctuated with smaller shrines. As the pilgrim mounted this Sacred Way, views of the temple above, silhouetted against the hulking mass of Mt. Parnassus, were alternately discovered, lost, and then regained. The final arrival at the temple portico afforded the opportunity to look back over the yawning gorge to the Gulf of Corinth sparkling in the distance and to reflect on the spiritual significance of the journey just completed.

Having myself made this pilgrimage, it seemed to me that its spiritual validity had remained largely undiluted through the ages, and that its impact had little to do with the esoterica of ancient Greek religion. The experience seemed to transcend time and to retain a power not bound by any one religious system. Indeed, I reflected that in Europe as well as in the Mediterranean, the Christian church once routinely appropriated

JAMES F. WILLIAMSON, AIA, a partner in the Memphis firm of Williamson Pounders Architects, was principal-in-charge of the design of St. Thomas More Church, which has received numerous design awards including a 2000 Religious Art and Architecture Award from Faith & Form, the Chicago Athenaeum 1999 American Architecture Award, a regional Honor award from the American Institute of Architects, and an Eugene Potente Liturgical Design Award.



St. Thomas More Church, Paducah, Kentucky, south facade showing ambulatory main entrance and bell tower.

JEFFREY JACOBS

ancient religious sites for the construction of its places of worship, a testament to their undeniable spiritual potency.

That we yearn for this kind of ritualistic expression of our spiritual journey is, no doubt, reflected in the current popularity of the labyrinth movement in several main-line religious denominations. In our sacred architecture, however, we seem to have largely forgotten the place of the ritual journey as a way of leaving the secular world behind as a precursor to worship. Often our arrival and entry experience is impoverished by uninspired design: We arrive in the parking lot that adjoins the building and then pop into the closest side door, many times bypassing the symbolic main entrance entirely to save a few steps. The experience is essentially identical, in terms of its absence of spiritual content, to a visit to the shopping mall where

stores are marooned in a sea of asphalt, alienated from all natural, social and symbolic context.

Is there any practical alternative, given our love of convenience? What might it be like, in our automobile-dominated culture, to rediscover the ritual journey as a way of approach to a modern house of worship? This was one of the questions my colleagues and I wrestled with as we began the design of a new Roman Catholic church.

The small city of Paducah, in the southwest corner of Kentucky, has never been a stronghold of Roman Catholicism. The Catholic Diocese is headquartered in Owensboro in the older central part of the state, and Paducah, originally settled by Scots-Irish Protestants, may have been perceived as something of a provincial outpost. For most of this century, the small Catholic community, such





Master site plan, St. Thomas More Church.

as it was, was not prominent. While its presence was symbolized downtown by the landmark St. Frances de Sales Church, another smaller parish, St. Thomas More, was located in an anonymous 1950s- vintage school building.

Despite its low profile, it was St. Thomas More Church that began to experience the faster growth, and by the 1980s the parish had outgrown the old school building. This, combined with the expansion of suburban Paducah into the surrounding countryside, prompted a decision to build a new church on the outskirts of town. Here, it was hoped, there would not only be room to grow, but of equal importance, there would be an opportunity to overcome an anony-

mous past and to make a statement to the larger community about the new vitality of Catholicism in Paducah.

The site selected seemed to bode well for these objectives, as well as for my own interest in somehow implementing the lessons learned climbing the sacred ways of Greece. While the approach to our site from town lacked the spectacular scenery of the Delphic gorge or the majesty of the Athenian acropolis, it did seem to possess a gentle drama, more reminiscent of Epidaurus, perhaps.

Consisting of some 20 acres of rolling pastureland, its most dominant feature was a prominent hilltop, with a large pond at its base. The surrounding landscape was serene and pastoral, except for

an unfortunate high-tension power line easement that somewhat marred the view north from the summit back toward town.

At our interview with the building committee, we emphasized the potential of the site and the beauty of its rural context. We explained how, in our initial visits to Western Kentucky, we had been deeply impressed by the simple masses of 19th Century tobacco barns and silos that dot the landscape. We drew a parallel to the Book of Matthew's vision of a city set on a hill, describing a new church that would be a beacon to the larger community and that would reflect in its massing the simple, noble forms of the indigenous rural architecture. I also touched on the notion of a carefully sequenced physical approach designed as a metaphor for a spiritual pilgrimage.

By the time we had been interviewed and selected as architects, the church had already engaged the services of the Rev. Richard S. Vosko, a respected liturgical consultant, to assist the building committee in articulating a vision for the new church. Dick Vosko, with whom we had worked before on the restoration of Memphis' Cathedral, has a passionate belief in the power of symbols to enrich the religious experience. Along with him we began to search out symbolic significance for the component requirements, while at the same time thinking about their functional relationships to each other and to the site. These conversations began to confirm the idea of a church in which the siting and design of the approach received as much thought as the design of the buildings.

We instinctively felt it important to take advantage of the prominent hilltop site, but also sensed that, as Frank Lloyd Wright once advised, the buildings should be "of the hill" rather than on it. The program called for a master plan for a new 25,000 square-foot church, to be constructed in two or more phases, with the initial phase to include the main worship space, chapels, meeting rooms, and parking. Later phases would incorporate a fellowship hall, administrative offices, and childcare facilities. Consequently, the earliest site studies showed the various components of the community clustered around an open plaza.

This "outdoor room," symbolizing the unity of the community of believers, we located at the crest of the hill. This not only maximized views and allowed the new church to make a strong statement;

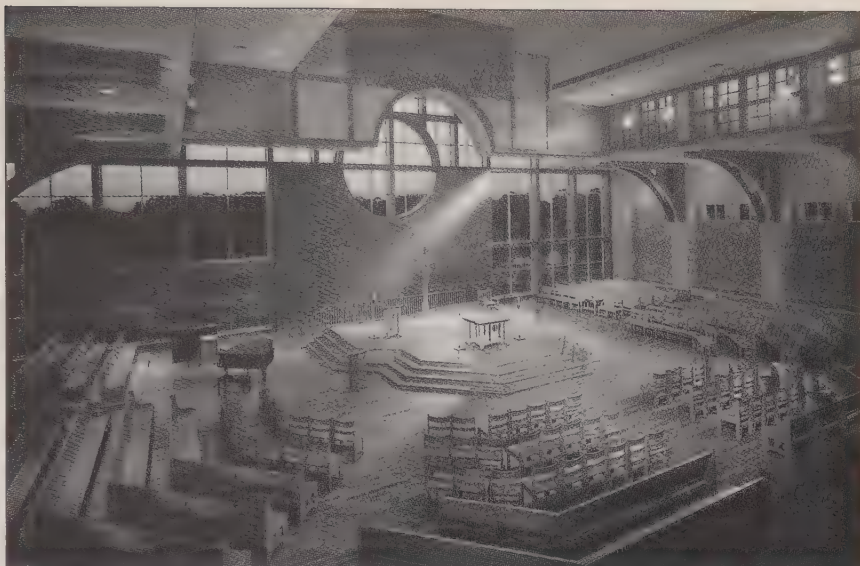


by leaving the crown of the hill free of buildings, it also helped avoid the appearance of an attempt to dominate or control the site. The plaza opened to the south, exposing the buildings to the prevailing summer breezes, a practical consideration in this part of Kentucky where the climate is more Southern than mid-Western. It also allowed the winter sun to enter. We were careful, however, to enclose the plaza with buildings on the north. Not only did this afford protection from northerly winds; it intentionally screened the view from the hilltop toward town.

But what to do about that indispensable nemesis of the modern architect, the automobile? We could not, of course ignore our clients' understandable desire to park as close as possible to the church. Yet it was obvious that to give over the central open space to parking, as is so often the case in a ubiquitous shopping center approach, would have destroyed the concept of the community room. It would destroy, as well, the drama of the modern "sacred way" we hoped to create. The solution was to take advantage of the hilltop and to wrap the parking in a concentric crescent around and below the buildings, following the natural contours of the hillside. Not only did this allow us to reduce the amount of "cut and fill" excavation required; it also allowed us to minimize the visual impact of the parking on the serenity of the church without an undue sacrifice of convenience.

As the modern pilgrim approaches by automobile from town, the first distant view of the church is of its north facade, silhouetted against the sky at the top of the hill. Seen in profile, the massing reflects the familiar asymmetrical compositions of simple forms seen in the rural vernacular architecture of the region. A bell tower punctuates the tree-line, a beacon to the world. Its verticality contrasts with the broad, sheltering rooflines of the nave. In their relationship and proportions, nave and tower allude not only to traditional Catholic religious architecture, but also to the vernacular relationship between barn and silo. The tower is an axis mundi, marking the intersection of heaven and earth, and serves as the visual pivot for a carefully scripted sequence of approach and entry.

Drawing closer along the highway and moving abreast of the still distant cluster of buildings, the church is abruptly obscured from view by a steep bank and



Main worship space, St. Thomas More Church.

JEFFREY JACOBS

a grove of shade trees. Slightly further ahead is a sign announcing the turn into the entrance driveway, made necessary by the fact that the church remains hidden. Moments later, however, it is rediscovered, glimpsed through the trees, much nearer now, still slightly elevated on the hilltop. The buildings are seen from a new perspective, this time from the southeast, where the composition is dominated by the tower. As one follows the curving driveway around to the south, the central plaza and the entrance facade of the main worship space emerge into view. At this distance the reference to indigenous rural materials can be appreciated, including the earth-colored, oversized brick, terra cotta-stained wood eave brackets and trim, and soft gray metal standing seam roofing.

The entry sequence continues in a pedestrian mode as the visitor finds a parking place and climbs a short distance up the hill, penetrating one of several portals between the buildings. (A covered porte-cochere is planned for the discharge of passengers in inclement weather or for those with physical disabilities.) Now one enters a covered ambulatory, recalling the monastic tradition, that will eventually surround the plaza on three sides, linking the main worship space, fellowship hall, offices, and child care spaces. The ambulatory not only serves as a collector and distributor of pedestrian traffic arriving from different parts of the concentric parking lot; it also dramatizes the rediscovery of the plaza and channels the flow of circulation toward the main entrance to the church.

Here, just outside the front doors, at the convergence of a series of radiating walkways at the heart of the outdoor room, will stand a primeval stone hearth, the place of the Easter fire.

Entering beneath the lintel of the wide glass and wood doors, inscribed "Let us Celebrate God's Presence with Joy," the visitor stands in the Gathering Space, a generous place of welcome and hospitality, large enough for informal assemblies of the entire congregation before and after services. To one side a low, cylindrical vestibule provides a slightly cave-like entrance to the Eucharistic reservation chapel, marked by a copper vigil lamp to indicate the presence of the consecrated Host. Now the tower is rediscovered one last time as the visitor steps into its 15-foot square base and gazes up some 50 feet to the ceiling. Punctuating the walls of this tall room are small randomly placed windows that allow beams of light to penetrate the tower as the sun moves through the sky. The red oak tabernacle stand, which we designed with the other liturgical furnishings to complement the architecture, suggests its origins as a tent as described in the Torah. Its tall proportions reflect the bell tower, and provide a place for the traditional brass tabernacle, brought from the old St. Thomas More Church.

Now, at last, one nears the culmination of the sacred way. From the Gathering Place, a second set of clear glass doors welcomes the worshippers into the nave where a black granite baptismal font with flowing water is recessed into

(Continued on page 23)



# IMAGES OF PARADISE

## A Report on IFRAA's Fall Meeting

Michael J. Crosbie



Those who attended "Images of Paradise," IFRAA's fall conference, were treated to a full complement of renderings of eternity, in architecture and art, across a variety of cultures. Throughout the lectures on painting, sculpture, garden design, and architecture (which took place on the campus of Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts), and visits to local sacred spaces, the theme of paradise wove like a golden thread.

### Gardens of Paradise

In the opening talk, Azim Nanji, director of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, pointed out that images of paradise have been shared across history and cultures. Often, paradise is set in a garden. Nanji pointed out that in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic cultures, the garden is the setting for creation, before history and before time.

Nanji took the Koran as his reference point for the creation story. Unlike the Bible's Adam and Eve, in the Koran Adam and his companion are created simultaneously, and only after their creation are assigned a gender. The creator places them in a garden, a place of tranquility and harmony, where every need is satisfied. But the story of Adam and his companion is also one of transgression and trespass. This first man makes a judgement about the application of knowledge and his choice is subjective. Nanji linked the dangers of subjective decisions to our degradation of the natural environment: "We make subjective decisions about the use of technology and resources." Ultimately, Adam and his

mate lose paradise, and for Nanji this is a story of how all humans lose their way. Our creation of paradise on earth, through gardens and other images, is an effort to regain place and restore paradise.

Nanji discussed garden design in Islam and its connections to images of paradise. "Water is the stuff of life," he noted, and is symbolic in garden design. Usually, four channels of water are present in gardens, oriented at the cardinal compass points. Symbolically, one is a river of water, another a river of milk (which is nurturing); a third a river of honey (symbolizing knowledge); the fourth a river of wine (knowledge that has reached maturity, or wisdom).

Nanji described the Alhambra in Spain as a summation of the Islamic tradition—a shimmering presence of nature. It, too, has a river in its garden, as does the Taj Mahal in India. "We are of God," said Nanji, "and to Him we ultimately

return." The garden is the setting in which humans return to God.

### Two Traditions Explored

Visits to two local religious buildings, one new and one old, underscored how sacred spaces reflect notions of paradise. At Young Israel Synagogue in Brookline, Massachusetts, architect Graham Gund explained how the new building grew from the ashes of the old, which was lost in a fire. Though he had never designed a synagogue, Gund was chosen, he believes, "because we would listen," and also because of the firm's experience in theater design.

The new synagogue sits on a tight site, with all four sides of the building requiring variances. While determining a compass point is easy, the orientation of the sanctuary had to be toward Jerusalem, and deciding the appropriate direction was not so simple. Gund explained that some consider proper orientation as a

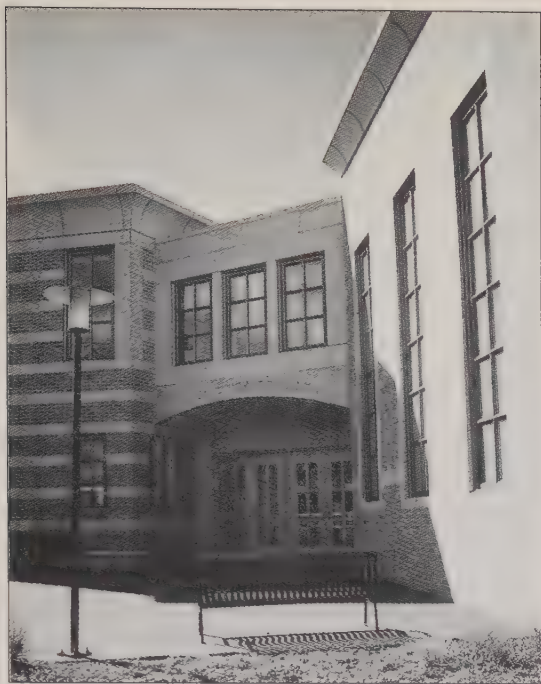


SARA MALONE

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE is assistant editor of *Faith & Form* and an associate with Steven Winter Associates, Inc. His book, *Architecture for the Gods*, is available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

Conference participants tour Young Israel Synagogue, Brookline, Mass. Graham Gund, architect.





Entry to Young Israel Synagogue.

straight line through the earth, while others trace the line on the surface of the earth. "It took the rabbi three weeks to determine the position of the sanctuary and the chapel."

For this modern orthodox congregation of 400, the most challenging decision in the design was where women in the congregation should sit. For orthodox Jews, women in the temple are considered a distraction to men, and are usually segregated behind a screen. It was decided to provide two-thirds of the women's seating in the balcony, and the rest behind a screen on the main floor. Gund believes that the balcony seating

allows the women to be in the same space as the men, "although liturgically, it's considered another realm." The main floor women's seating is screened by clear plexiglass, formed in Hebrew letters replicating verses from the bible that extol the virtues of women and their worth. The screens and furniture in the temple were designed by Michael Berkowicz and Bonnie Srolovitz of Presentations Gallery.

Afterward, conferees attended vesper services at the Holy Cross Memorial Chapel on the campus of Hellenic College in Brookline. The chapel's design—a classic Greek cross with arches and domes—served to amplify the chanting and singing voices of the seminarians and

congregation gathered. After the services, it was explained that the architecture and decoration is an expression of a particular faith and vision of God. Through architecture, the building seeks to create a heavenly place, the age to come, the end times—in other words, a vision of paradise. The interior's dome and arches are an embrace of the congregation by the church, a bending of the heavens, and "God coming to us," noted the priest.

### Belief and Sacred Space

Participants were treated to an engaging talk by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner from Hebrew Union College, titled "When God

*If God is not up in heaven, Kushner noted, then the vertical height of a sacred space is not as important as its horizontal breadth.*

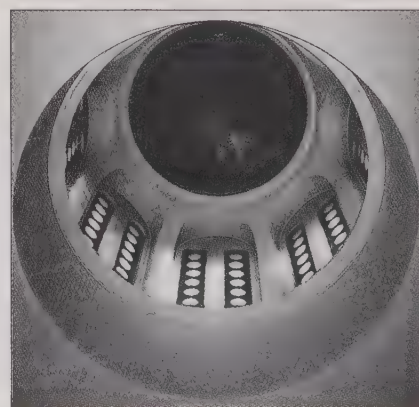
is not in Heaven: A Mystical Re-Vision of the Architecture for Places of Communal Prayer." The author of several books, Kushner noted that architecture has a profound affect on the structure of religion, and our concept of God. In what he called "performance worship—there is a show up front and you are the spectator. It will go on whether you're there or not. The cathedral model is the dominant form throughout the Judeo-Christian tradition; the amount and intensity of participation by the congregation is inversely proportional to the distance from the leader to the first row of pews."

Kushner questioned the validity of such a model in a world undergoing "a tectonic shift" in its view of sacred reality. In classical theism, God is "up there" and we are "down here." He argued for a mystical model where we exist as a part of God, or, as the Zen master said to the hot dog vendor, "Make me one with everything."

If God is not up in heaven, Kushner noted, then the vertical height of a sacred space is not as important as its horizontal breadth. Human faces become "windows" into the church, "and looking at the back of people's heads doesn't help," nor is the hierarchy of the clergy relevant.



Holy Cross Memorial Chapel, Hellenic College, Brookline, Mass.



Dome of Holy Cross Memorial Chapel.





*Boston Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Tsoi/Kobus, architect.*

A mini-lecture series on Images of Paradise (moderated by Robin Jensen, director of Andover Newton's Theology and Arts program) presented an opportunity to consider different projects in location and culture. Architect Fernando Domeyko, who teaches at MIT, spoke at length about his design and construction of a church to St. Teresa in Chile. He recounted the evolution of the design, which incorporated oval geometry, "a new cosmology" and "infinity of form," and axial organization between the entry, the bell tower, and the ocean. He stressed his approach in "building with sound and light," not building a box, and noted the use of light in ancient sacred buildings such as the Roman Pantheon. He chose to render the church's exterior shell in poured-in-place concrete, faceted in sections that catch the light as it moves across the surface. The interior, finished in natural wood, was tuned like a fine instrument to ensure that sound would be balanced and resonate throughout the space.

Architect Ann Vivian delivered a concise talk on paradise as a contrast to the here and now, and how we create boundaries within sacred space to symbolize it. She pointed out that paradise was "a precinct apart," and spoke about Stonehenge and St. Peter's Square as examples. These, like paradise, Vivian noted, "offer retreats from the rest of the world."

Rev. John Chrysavgis of the School of Theology at Hellenic College offered a penetrating analysis of the Byzantine and contemporary Orthodox church, in which

architecture and belief are intimately related. In such sacred spaces, he said, "there are three essential elements: other worldliness, sacred images, and cosmic liturgy. Otherworldliness is a product of the church being a link between this world and another world. 'The building is an epiphany.'"

*Architect Ann Vivian delivered a concise talk on paradise as a contrast to the here and now, and how we create boundaries within sacred space to symbolize it.*

Sacred images are woven into every space; rather than simply house icons, the church building envelopes them. Icons speak of the world to come, and facial portraiture is the primary vehicle of communication. Faces are never shown in profile (which implies sin). In cosmic liturgy, events and ceremonies are expressed in the building's form. Orthodox churches have three clearly defined spaces. At the top, the dome is the most holy and is reserved for depictions of Christ; the naos, or nave, is filled with images of the saints; the apse is reserved for icons of the Virgin Mother, rendered in mosaic or painting.

## Mormon Paradise

One of the high points of this conference was the opportunity to tour the newly completed Boston Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, designed by the local firm of Tsoi/Kobus. One of 100 temples worldwide, Mormons consider this building one of the holiest places on earth. It was open to the public for approximately a month, after which it would be closed to all except Mormons in good standing. Believers attend Sunday services at their local chapel or meeting house but make the journey to the temple to "learn more about the purpose of life and make covenants to serve Jesus Christ and other people. In addition, they participate in ordinances, such as baptism and eternal marriage for their deceased ancestors." The temple is not for corporate worship.

The temple is sited near a major highway, and appears to be modeled on the classic Congregational church common to New England: white, rectangular exteriors; rows of windows along the long sides; and a tall steeple at the front entrance. It was nearly complete except for its steeple, which is still being studied because it exceeds local height limitations. The 70,000-square-foot temple is divided into a labyrinth of some 200 rooms. Major spaces are the baptistry, sealing rooms (where eternal marriages are performed and families are sealed to their ancestors), endowment rooms (where life's most puzzling questions are answered), and a celestial room.

Colors become lighter, light becomes more intense, and ceilings are taller as one moves from the ground level to the top floor. Once the building is dedicated, Mormons must wear white clothes when inside the temple (there are large rooms with lockers to keep your temple clothes in). The interior is not akin to worship spaces found in other Judeo-Christian buildings. The interior reminded me more of a very large, expensively furnished funeral home. If an image of paradise is present here, it is the celestial room, found at the apse end of the temple on the top floor. It was not clear exactly what goes on in this space, but it is completely white: walls, carpet, ceiling, furniture, lamp shades. It looks like heaven's waiting room.

## Garden and Chapel

Conference tours on the last day included a visit to Mount Auburn Cemetery, and to two academic chapels of



note: one at Emmanuel College and the other at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Mount Auburn Cemetery captures a Victorian notion of what paradise might be like: a rolling, hilly landscape covered with beautiful plantings and ornately carved monuments under which rest some of Boston's most illustrious citizens: Oliver Wendell Holmes, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Longfellow, B.F. Skinner; and also some famous architects: Asher Benjamin, Charles Bulfinch, and Buckminster Fuller. Touted as America's first garden cemetery, Mount Auburn opened in 1831. Although it was not designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (to whom it is commonly attributed), it does have a naturalistic, English garden setting that Olmsted later adopted. It was actually designed by Jacob Bigelow, who helped establish the cemetery and designed some of its landmark buildings.

Emmanuel College Chapel, recently restored by the Boston firm of Keefe Associates, was brought back to its former glory. Designed originally by noted church architect Charles Maginnis in 1919, the chapel underwent an extensive restoration in 1998. Previously, the altar had been moved to a side wall in the nave in observance of Vatican II's effort to place the center of worship near the congregants. In the restoration, the altar was relocated to its original, pre-Vatican II position. The marble altar rail was removed and portions of it were used to make a new altar table, which is faithful to the chapel's design. Water damage from a leaky roof was repaired, the roof was fixed, and Keefe Associates focused on bringing as much of the chapel back to its original condition as possible. Mechanical and electrical systems were upgraded, pews were refurbished, wallpapers were replaced, and decorative painting throughout was restored. New lighting in the chapel now accents the large carved beams that distinguish the interior.

In contrast, Eero Saarinen's MIT chapel of 1955 is a model of restraint, relying on the mystery of water, reflected light, natural materials, and curved surfaces. It sits in a shallow moat, which is integral to its atmospheric sanctum. The interior's serpentine brick interior walls extend over the moat, and a channel of horizontal glazing allows one to look down into the moat from inside. The real magic happens when sunlight strikes the water, bounces up into the chapel, and bathes



PETER VANDERWARKER

Emmanuel College Chapel, Boston, restored by Keefe Associates Inc.

*The conference's closing lecture by John Wesley Cook considered visions of paradise as found in the Wies Kirche, a chapel built in Germany in 1743.*

the brick walls in dappled, reflected light. Over a simple block of white marble that serves as an altar, hundreds of metal leaves appear to flurry down like manna from heaven, illuminated beneath a skylight. With careful modulation of light, Saarinen created a space well suited for

solitary contemplation—fitting the academic temperament.

### Heaven's Above

The conference's closing lecture by John Wesley Cook, president of the Henry Luce Foundation, considered visions of paradise as found in the Wies Kirche, a chapel built in Germany in 1743 to house a sculpture from the late Middle Ages depicting the flagellation of Christ. The church is oval in plan, with a single entry leading to a tiny narthex. This compressed space prepares one for the richly decorated chapel interior that was a collaboration of architect, painter, and stucco artist. Here, Cook notes, one finds a heavenly realm, a space "about eternity, a paradise." The Wies Kirche offered conferees yet another version of paradise—an elusive place that has been reinterpreted and depicted throughout the ages. □



# THE RESURRECTION OF A SMALL GYMNASIUM

By William S. Patten



This is the story of the transformation of a neglected 19th Century gymnasium into a vibrant multi-purpose center for the arts and worship. What made it happen at Andover Newton Theological School involved a combination of fortuitous circumstances: the imagination and persistence of a couple of church historians, the timely and energetic convergence of certain faculty interests, the steady support of an academic dean, and perhaps most significantly the inherent charm of the simple little gable-roofed red brick building itself with its large light-filled central room with exposed beams and round-headed windows.

Tucked away on a wooded hill in the middle of the prosperous town of Newton, Massachusetts, just inside Route 128, the beltway around Boston, the liberal Protestant seminary, Andover Newton, has survived from the merger of two early 19th Century seminaries: a Congregational divinity school started in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1807 and a Baptist seminary founded in the present location in Newton in 1825. Since joining together in 1931, Andover Newton Theological School has broadened its theological range of students and now serves over 45 different denominations.

Today, about 80 percent of the students commute to their classes, thereby forcing the school to find ways to redeploy the use of its handsome 19th Century buildings. This diminished number of students living on campus is one of the key factors behind the transforma-



Meeting house and gallery at Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

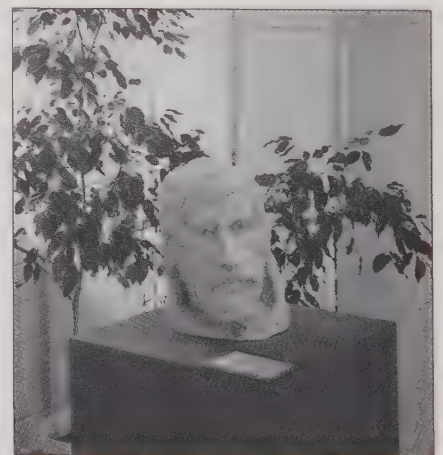
tion of the building in question. In an historical sense, the Burgess Gymnasium, as it became known in 1932, had developed the character of an orphan. Small next to its surrounding buildings (only 66 by 28 feet), it stands overshadowed by the main buildings around the quad. Although it was constructed over 100 years ago specifically as a gymnasium, records suggest that even in the days of "muscular Christianity," there was always a certain amount of official ambivalence about how much to invest into exercise of the body.

The original idea of a gym appears to have come from the students, and just 20 years after its eventual construction, around the turn of the last century, the students were bemoaning the "thrifless" character of their existing facility. In the school paper in 1903, one student wrote:

"But what of the present gymnasium? Well, as a man said about his poor, thrifless relative, 'Please don't mention the matter.' We hope soon to bury the last remains. The administration is not proud enough of the present adjunct to even mention it in the Necrology list."

A June 13, 1876, entry in the record book of trustees shows that the gymnasium was constructed with materials taken from the Mansion House that dominated the plot of land purchased by the school for its founding. The record states, "...that a Gymnasium be built, for the construction of which shall be used such materials as may be found in the Mansion House, suitable for such a purpose..." Some of the Meetinghouse timbers therefore date to 1790, the year of the Mansion House construction. (The 1903 student newspaper's use of the term "adjunct" remains fitting for this relatively small building, which still stands on the edge of the campus, clearly "in the rear" behind two much larger and more imposing brick structures.)

Still, for at least the first half of the



Sam Gore, professor, Mississippi College (bust).

WILLIAM S. PATTEN, a former editor and journalist, is now the administrator of Arts and Theology at Andover Newton. His work involves new programs, marketing, fund-raising and responsibility for the Meetinghouse.





*Pelican, brass and copper, by Sergio Bustamante.*



*"Extraordinary Time," tapestry by Sylvia J. Everett, resident artist, ANTS.*

20th Century, the Burgess Gymnasium was used by students for recreational and exercise purposes. The bathroom in the basement contains the remnants of shower stalls and locker room style toilets. The main room seems to have been used mainly for basketball, and returning graduates looking at the old wooden floor sometimes mention how knowledge of the floor soft spots would give their home teams a competitive advantage. Little by little the building fell into disrepair, and the basement became a large repository for storage materials.

In a sense, the groundwork for an arts center was already being laid in the 1980s under the tenure of the president, George Peck., and professor Max Stackhouse. The arrival of Dean Elizabeth Nordbeck in 1990, together with Dr. Robin Jensen the following year, created the nucleus of what became the Arts and Theology Committee. Both were church historians. Jensen in particular had written her dissertation on images and symbols in early Christian baptism. Two years later, Jensen founded an experiential arts and theology two-week summer program that enlisted the artistic expertise of other members of the faculty such as Mark Burrows, another church historian, and Carole Fontaine, a professor of Hebrew Bible. This institute, which featured hands-on involvement with creating art in song, dance, words and images, became a visible expression of the faculty's commitment to connecting artistic and theological education and found its home in the building soon to be called "the Meetinghouse."

The arts momentum on campus came to a head in the spring of 1995. The previous year the faculty was joined by the team of Sylvia and Bill Everett. The for-

mer brought her expertise as a working artist primarily in textiles, together with a need for working space, and the latter an avocation in carpentry as well as an interest in art and theology. A couple of students stood ready to lend a hand, most notably David Olson.

In late March of 1995, the trustees gave permission for the old "Burgess Gymnasium" to be renovated and used as an arts center. On April 1, the Everetts, in partnership with the school's Theology and Arts Committee, started working on the building. This group of volunteers, including students and faculty, started cleaning years of grime from the building, stripping and painting the floors, reglazing and painting windows, painting doors, walls and ceilings, and rebuilding the porch. The Summer Institute used the building for the first time that summer. At the September convocation that year, the renovated building was dedicated as the Center for Theology and Art in a special service.

A couple of years later a small fund was established in memory of the student Susan Baer, which was used to expand the heating system and update the electrical fixtures. In the spring of 1999, I was hired as a professional administrator under a three-year Henry Luce grant. Additional grant money was soon raised to make the building accessible and provide an attached storage shed on the rear, since the facility has become increasingly popular for public receptions as well as workshops, worship services and music, drama and dance performances.

In the summer, the school accepted 150 pieces of visual art from the collection of Dr. Gerald Taylor, part of which was sold to start an endowment for the



*Colors of the Gospels, tapestry and mosaic panels by Sylvia J. Everett.*

arts program. A professional sculptor and ordained UCC minister, Charles McCollough has been engaged to work as a resident artist in the Meetinghouse during the fall of 2000. This past summer, the seventh session of the Summer Institute was held at the Meetinghouse as well as the first "Faith, Health and Spirituality" Summer Institute led by Professor Brita Gill-Austern.

Although the smallest building on campus, the converted gym seems to have adapted to the changing times with greater dexterity than the larger buildings that surround it. As the school has been selling off significant portions of its real estate to stay financially afloat, the little "Meetinghouse," as it was first called by the founders of the Theology and Arts program, seems to have found a momentum of its own. It is charting its own way under its own steam as all around it traditional theological education in the U.S. tries to maintain its foothold moving into the 21st Century. □





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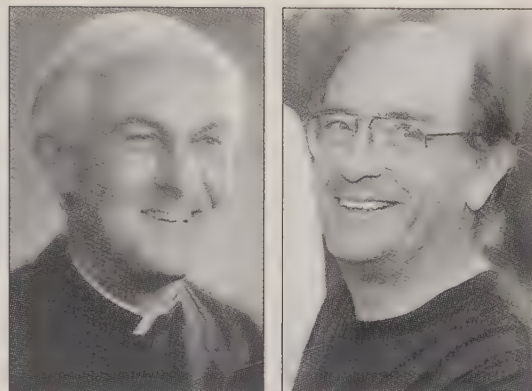
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# A RESPONSE TO RICHARD WILLIAMS' REPORT FROM ROME



By Father John Domin and Charles Lehman

*Editor's Note:* Father John Domin, a priest for 45 years, has dedicated his life to teaching and creative work in the ministry. He has served at the Portland Art Museum, the University of Washington Art Department, and with Coirita Kent in Los Angeles. He was chairman of the Sacred Heart Art Commission for the Archdiocese of Portland from 1958 to 1988. During this time, he engaged in the design process and remodeling of over 100 chapels and churches, several of which won national recognition.

Charles Lehman is a calligrapher and graphic designer in Portland, Oregon. He has a special interest in researching and designing ancient symbols of Christ for use in church architecture and liturgy. He recently published Fr. Domin's book with CD, *The Renewal of Catholic Church Architecture and Furnishing in Western Oregon, 1968-1995*. The two-volume set features a hardbound book with an essay and captions for the 300 slides presented on the CD. Contact: Charles Lehman, 4116 SW Tualatin Avenue, Portland, OR 97201.

The following is a response to Richard Williams' "Report from Rome," which appeared in the last issue of *Faith & Form* (No. 2, 2000).

When Richard Williams attended the Fifth International Liturgical Congress in Rome, he expected from church leaders a forward looking spirit with architectural styles to match, expressing "qualities of refreshing simplicity; open and prophetic." Instead, the keynote speaker, rite-meister Cardinal Virgilio Noe, Vicar General of Vatican City, joined with other Vatican authorities and visiting dignitaries and "reaffirmed the basilica plan over radial or other spatial forms and adherence to 'traditional styles.'" Williams walked into what might be termed a "clerical cultural expression" within the Church, a ploy by a cabal of "restorationists" who hope to flip church

*The beliefs documented in Vatican II drive the proper development of modern Catholic Church architecture. It is still a case of "form follows function."*

architecture back to reinforce their overall conservative position. As a matter of style, they compel blind allegiance rather than guide the faithful and the basilica serves as a visible rallying point to eliminate collegiality.

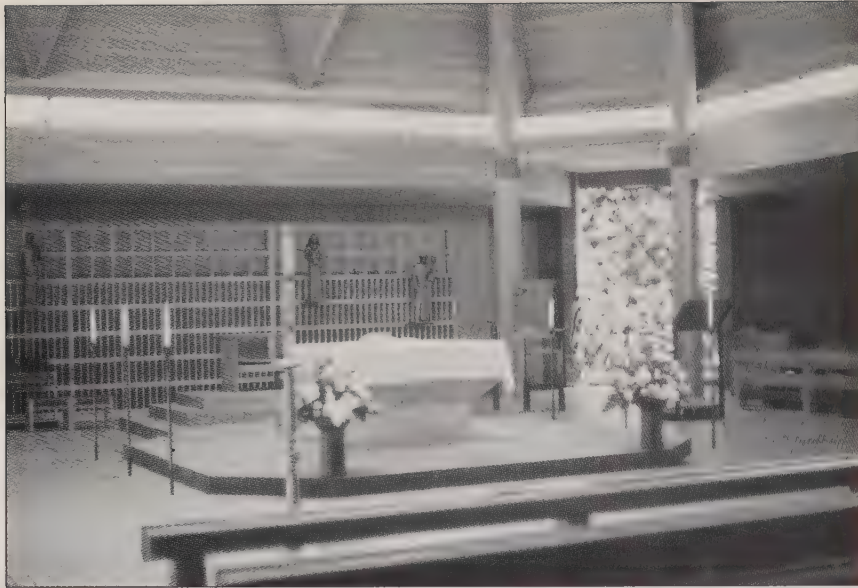
But it is difficult to take disgruntled recalcitrants seriously. Vatican II, the worldwide meeting of hierarchy in Rome,

1963-1965, renewed 16 major aspects of the Church and those published decisions, *Documents of Vatican II*, bind the Church even today. One chapter in the section, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," "Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings," explicitly contradicts restorationists as does common sense. "Church architecture embodies theology," and the beliefs documented in Vatican II drive the proper development of modern Catholic Church architecture. It is still a case of "form follows function," the form and environment for public worship based on beliefs. The form of the church building must flow from the "fountain from which all power flows," ultimately the belief that Jesus is the Son of God sent by the Father to be the instrument of our salvation, to reconcile us to the Father through his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father, and that through his sacrifice "we



The roof of St. Joseph Church (built 1966), Roseburg, Oregon, is patterned after towers of "wigwam" burners used in the area's lumber and logging industry.





The sanctuary of St. Joseph Church with the altar surrounded by pews on three sides. Note the three statues on the back wall and the floor-anchored candlesticks.

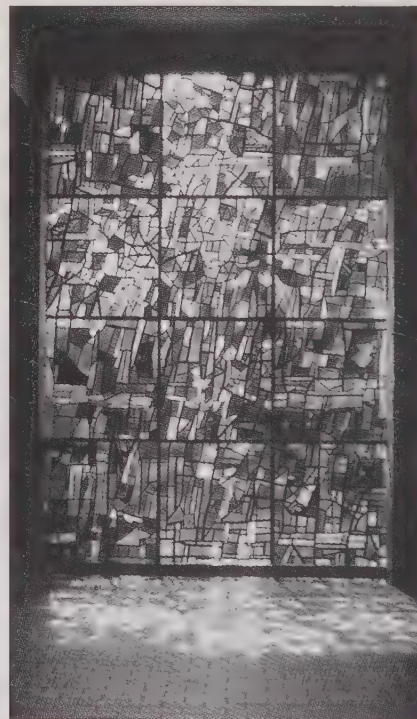
received the means for giving worthy worship to God."

The key question to be resolved for architectural design, as well as the liturgy itself, is where does God dwell? It is the Church's belief that the glorified Jesus continues with the Church, literally present in his substance (not merely as a sign, symbol or figure or through his activity) in the Sacrament of the Eucharist (the worthy Christian sacrifice to God offered in the Mass); in the words of Sacred Scripture; in the person of the minister (priest) who offers the sacrifice of the Mass and "he is present finally, when the Church prays and sings" ("General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy"). It is from these ancient beliefs, reaffirmed by Vatican II, that the ritual traditions and symbolic expressions derived from Sacred Scripture have developed over the centuries.

Theologian Karl Rahner notes that "the liturgy of the world, that is, the ordinary work by which we sanctify ourselves from day to day, is where we meet Christ, and our Eucharistic ritual points to that. Our worship is a microcosm of our worship all week long through our work. The real presence of God in Christ is nothing more or less than the liturgy of this world, smelling of work and sacrifice." The liturgy and its setting reflect who the worshipers are and why they come together as one. It expresses those who, as members of "the common priesthood of the faithful," join in the offering of the

Eucharist and "likewise exercise that priesthood by receiving the sacraments."

Basilicas no longer support the theology of a people uniting in Christ to worship the Father. The seating plan must enable the assembly to carry out its role in harmonious architectural environments that utilize vibrant imagery as well as the language and gestures of rituals that embody these beliefs. Chapter VII,



One of four windows in St. Joseph Church, Roseburg, Oregon, 1966.



The baptistry with sunken floor built in 1966 before the renewal of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults could still be used today for immersion baptism.

"Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings," explains: "The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own; she has admitted fashions from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites" (paragraph 123). But a brief footnote (62) notes, "This marks a strong welcome to the art of our day, which is the art that should participate in our worship" (emphasis added).

His Holiness Pope John Paul II addressed a letter to "all who search for new 'epiphanies' of beauty" ("Architecture and the Arts at the Service of the Liturgy," Easter, 1999). He called on artists to use their creative intuition, as did Bramante, Bernini, Borromini, and Maderno before them, to enter into the heart of the mystery of the Incarnate God, noting that many impulses can inspire an artist's talent and that the Creator Spirit stirs the creative power of human genius. No mention of a basilica design for churches, only use of the architect's native genius to express the Church's beliefs in an honest, functional style.

The Pope's letter and the documents of Vatican II authentically define the position of the Roman Catholic Church regarding church design to serve the liturgy. To confirm the understanding, consider a later writing in *Environment and Art* magazine: "Special attention must be given to the unity of the entire liturgical space. Before considering the distinction



of roles within the liturgy, the space should communicate an integrity (a sense of oneness, of wholeness) and a sense of being the gathering place of the initiated community. Within that one space there are different areas corresponding to different roles and functions, but the wholeness of the total space should be strikingly evident." (EACW, n.53). This puts the focus on the assembly of people where the Risen Christ resides as well as on the bread of the Eucharist. It is in both that God dwells.

Those who exploit Vatican positions as a functionary's functionary, obstinately kicking against the authority of the Ecumenical Council as well as His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, are like a bunch of unstrung beads gathering legitimacy by repeating themselves. "There is nothing more destructive to the human condition than religious imagination perverted by the self-serving motives of authority. All that has been dramatically violent in this world has been the product of it: the Crusades, the inquisition ...

*Basilicas no longer  
support the theology of a  
people uniting in Christ  
to worship the Father.*

genocide. It has the power to reject upon its own principles all that is new, all that attempts to free itself from it. Religious authority is emancipated from the common obligations of humanity and gives in return the adventitious honor of the office. Autocratic power on the one hand calling for slavish submission on the other" (Lloyd Johnson).

On the other hand, there is nothing so constructive as the Creator Spirit stirring personal intuition. Restorationists might dwell on the following: "...to receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1397.). What if inspired Vatican leaders required every Catholic church to incorporate facilities for daily on-site service to the poor as the fulfillment of the liturgy? Instead of literally stepping over the poor sleeping in the entry ways to Sunday Mass, we would be serving them breakfast, and then receiving the Eucharist ourselves. This would be trouble for sure but that is what architects deal with best. □

## A SPIRITUAL PATH

(Continued from page 13)



JEFFREY JACOBS

St. Thomas More Church, Paducah, Kentucky, north facade at night.

the floor. Its octagonal shape recalls the fonts of the early church, when the baptism was often a separate structure outside the nave. The font is an ancient, multi-valent life-giving symbol, a place for both baptism and burial, symbolizing the entrance of the individual into the spiritual life of the church. We designed an upper basin of copper in which infants are baptized, as well as the shallow lower pool where adults may be immersed. Water wells up through the upper bowl, spills over its rim, and flows softly down into the lower pool.

Conceived as a metaphor for the people of God, the nave serves as a resonator of their traditions and their visions. Here, a noble but simple setting for the liturgical action of the assembly is created through the use of natural materials—wood and masonry—and light, which enters the large volume through a 50 foot high, north facing wall of windows and oversized clerestories. The semi-circular seating pattern surrounding the raised altar platform creates a sense of unity and fosters active participation during the liturgy. The custom-designed pew ends lend definition to the aisles without separating the members of the congregation from each other.

Here in the nave the procession reaches its climax as the visitor gazes to the altar and then beyond, through the window-wall to the natural world. By carefully orienting the nave so as to avoid a view of the power lines, the pond, which remains in its natural state, gracefully fringed by cattails and willow trees, instead dominates the foreground. Beyond and below, the rolling pastoral landscape unfolds to the north, and the

pilgrim can now visually retrace the journey from the town to the sacred place on the hill.

At the dedication of St. Thomas More Church on a crisp November afternoon, the ancient liturgy of the Church with its metaphors for life's spiritual journey was celebrated for the first time against the architectural backdrop of the new sacred place. The congregation and visitors made their way along the highway from town, first glimpsing the church on its distant hilltop, then losing it, then rediscovering it. Approaching the plaza on foot, they were greeted by the Knights of Columbus, resplendent in plumed hats and billowing capes, lining the arcade. At the main entrance the Bishop received the plans to the new church from us, the architects, and in turn presented the keys to the pastor. Carrying palm fronds and singing hymns, the procession then filed through the Gathering Space and past the baptismal font into the light-filled nave, where it encircled the space as the Bishop sprinkled the building and the people with water. After an enthralling liturgical dance performed by young girls brandishing plates of incense, the Bishop anointed the new altar table with oil, dedicating the new church to the glory of God.

As the service unfolded, the people, perhaps reminded that we are pilgrims, gazed beyond to the distant hills and the billowing clouds. Perhaps some of them recalled the origins of their journey to this place from a town that lay just over the horizon and to which they would presently return, renewed and refreshed by the ancient spiritual power of the sacred way. □



# A CONTINUING LEGACY

By Susan McCormick and Steve Swanson



Picture a newly constructed auditorium, softly lit and filled with decorated banquet tables. Church leaders, staff members and teens finish placing salads and water on the tables while building committee members wait at the entrance to welcome the special guests. Smiles, hugs and warm words greet the plumbers, engineers, painters, masons, architects, and carpenters as they arrive for this evening devoted to celebrating and appreciating every person who participated in designing and building Westlake Bible Church's new facility in Austin, Texas. Congregation members join the workers and their families for a shared meal and lighthearted fun. The slide show capturing many of the workers in action is a big hit and the senior pastor's sincere words of friendship and appreciation linger as people say good-night. Although the project is finished, many of the relationships continue. The banquet is the public celebration of what God accomplished as the church sought His ways in building their new facility.

Hundreds of congregations will start building projects this year with visions of better serving their faith, and with a space to welcome newcomers into their fellowship. Each will include numerous decisions, challenges, conversations, solutions and anxious moments and joys that will either leave a legacy of:

- Broken relationships in the congregation
- Tension (if not lawsuits) with the architect, contractor and subcontractors
- The departure of the senior pastor and several longtime members
- Exhaustion among the building committee members

- Uncomfortable debt pressure or
- Increased unity within the congregation
- Deep fellowship among building committee members
- Trust, respect, open communication, collaboration, consensus, and friendship among all the participants—contractor, architect, subcontractors, church members and staff
- Ministry to people who worked on the project
- A superior end product—timely completion, cost effectiveness, creative responses to challenges
- Joy and gratitude for the facility

What will make the difference? Listen to Steve Matthews, an Elder at Westlake Bible Church, who comments: "Churches tend to set aside their ministry mind-set when interacting with people building their facilities. They tend to adopt a 'business is business' approach, and overlook the potential for impacting the lives of many people who are not in a church unless they are building it." Steve's congregation resisted the business approach and increasingly learned about "loving your neighbor as yourself" on their construction project. The project was built within the desired time and

money parameters by people who enjoyed working together and remain friends. This experience was so striking for the architect that he took advantage of a presentation ceremony to share it with his peers. "We truly felt we had an appointment with God to be able to work on this project. The normal approach is that someone has to lose in order for someone to win. This congregation had a different approach, of commitment and trust. On numerous occasions subcontractors said, 'Nobody has ever treated us this well before.' Such comments contrast sharply with the common industry viewpoint that church projects are undesirable because of the number of people they have to try to please and the increased potential for complaints and controversy."

The builder, who is a Christian, told the building committee: "You can minister to people while they are building. The construction industry is yearning for what believers have. Take this opportunity to develop relationships and let them experience the faith that is yours." Shortly before construction began the builder organized a Partnering Workshop that was attended by the Senior Pastor, building committee members, major



Westlake Bible Church, Austin, Texas.

SUSAN MCCORMICK is the Community Life director at Westlake Bible Church, and STEVE SWANSON was the builder for the project.





*Worship Center/multipurpose room, Westlake Bible Church.*

subcontractors, and architects. These partners spent a day together sharing priorities and values, adopting a team approach to problem solving, and discussing their roles in the partnership, which included the entire process of designing and building. At the end of the day each participant signed a charter which included commitments to trust, honesty, respect, open communication, consensus, team ownership of challenges, solutions, and quality work. The benefits from these partnering discussions began to be evident immediately and grew throughout the project. When people aren't fearing blame or litigation they voice challenges early and openly so the team can tackle them together. An atmosphere of shared responsibility as well as a desire for personal accountability replace wary defensiveness and legalism. Group decisions are respected even by those who favor another alternative. The WBC project encountered significant challenges including a sloping site, extended bad weather, necessary design changes, labor shortages and delayed material deliveries. All parties remained firm in working together to find the best solutions for everyone. As trust grew, people were increasingly willing to offer solutions that cost their own company time or money, but were in the best

interest of the project. Everyone's belief that they would be treated fairly reduced self-protection and allowed creativity to flourish.

As Westlake Bible Church caught the vision of sharing God's love during construction, the congregation created opportunities to serve and build relationships with the workers. During the hot Texas summer, cold drinks were delivered to the site. Desserts often appeared in the construction trailer on days when the contractors and subcontractors were meeting. Before Thanksgiving, church members brought out salads, rolls, and dessert to go with the chili that two of the construction superintendents cooked: everyone shared the lunch. Early one December morning the church staff and elders showed up with coffee, donuts, and Christmas cards for all the workers. The cards had been decorated by the children in Sunday school and each message was a hand written expression of gratitude from adults in the church. The pastor shared a Christmas devotional while everyone enjoyed the refreshments. On-site meetings and errands became opportunities for friendly conversations with the workers.

Generosity and kindness flowed to the congregation as well as from it. Twice during construction the general contrac-

tors spent extra time cleaning and adapting the site for visits by the whole congregation. These "open houses" nurtured the church's unity and joy as the congregation experienced the construction progress, saw the color boards, and pictured their shared future in the facility. It's not uncommon to hear, "That's not my job" on a construction site, but the Westlake Bible project repeatedly experienced people going out of their way to be helpful in areas that were not their usual responsibility.

Probably the most outstanding example came during move-in week when WBC had to vacate the office/educational space by a certain date and for a week the contractors shared the same space. What most people would

expect to be a nightmare actually became a highlight, because everyone enjoyed being together and were united around the goal of getting the building ready for church on Sunday. Church staff and construction workers alike worked long into each night and went from being a great team to being a true community with common purpose, interdependence, and genuine caring. Often the sacred is swallowed up by the secular, but in this instance the secular became sacred.

Admittedly, stepping outside business norms takes courage and energy, as does accountability, grace and stewardship of funds. Is a contract a potential weapon or a written record of an agreement together? What are the church's priorities?

Experiences and lessons from this building project continue to bless the church. Groups, committees, and task forces increasingly choose to spend time together and get to know each other before turning to whatever issue is at hand. There is a much deeper understanding of faith and of each member's crucial contribution to the health of the entire congregation. There is a reaching out beyond the walls of the church into the community as never before. The legacy of the building project continues to grow and we are sincere in coveting this experience for all congregations. □



# DESIGNING A SPIRITUALITY CENTER TO NURTURE CAREGIVERS



By Kalevi Huutilainen, AIA

How can an organization dedicated to providing holistic care to its customers also practice what it preaches for its employees?

A commitment to workplace spirituality—"healing the healers," in effect—has long been a focus of St. Vincent Hospitals & Health Services in Indianapolis, Indiana, and its sponsoring organization, Ascension Health in St. Louis, Missouri. But it became increasingly important in the mid-1990s as St. Vincent officials saw the stresses of everyday life and of the healthcare profession taking a greater toll on their physicians, nurses, staff and volunteers.

"To take care of the physical and spiritual needs of others, our caregivers must nurture their own spiritual needs," says Sister Sharon Richardt, St. Vincent's vice president of mission services. "We needed to focus our efforts and make good on our commitment to holistic care for our associates."

In 1996, Sr. Sharon visited the Seton Cove retreat house in Austin, Texas. The Texas facility, loosely affiliated with a nearby medical center, provided programs about spirituality to the general public. Couldn't St. Vincent adopt this same model, Sr. Sharon wondered, but tailor its offerings to the hospital's staff?

Designing a building in which to carry out this mission was the challenge hospital officials ultimately presented to BSA Design, Inc. in 1997, asking us to



Seton Cove Spirituality Center, Indianapolis, Indiana. BSA Design, architect.

design a hospital building that could inspire like a church.

Sr. Sharon remembers well her original charge to our design team.

"I told them we had four priorities," she says today. "We wanted inspiration, a design that was simple, clean and without clutter. We wanted flexibility; we needed to be able to use the space in different ways. We wanted to bring the outside in and the inside out. And it had to be done within our budget."

For a budget of \$1.5 million, or about \$100 a square foot, BSA delivered the Seton Cove Spirituality Center, a building that walks the line between institutional and inspirational. It looks home-like while accommodating groups of up to 50 people.

"We just celebrated our second year here at Seton Cove, and I haven't found anything I would change about the building," Sr. Sharon says. "We bring 400 to 600 people a month through here for different programs. It's a beautiful and functional space."

## The Site

The first task was to find a site for Seton Cove. The St. Vincent campus is located on a busy commercial street—a fine, accessible place for a major hospital, but too chaotic for a retreat center. The rear of the hospital's 130 acres, however, included a densely wooded area. And back in the woods was a retention pond. It was a site separated from the hospital but within a short walk or drive of the

*KALEVI HUUTILAINEN, AIA, is a principal at BSA Design in Indianapolis, Indiana, one of the largest full-service architecture, engineering, and interior design firms in the Midwest. Kalevi has designed for numerous faith-based organizations, including churches and other religious facilities.*



institution. Here, on the slightly rolling terrain overlooking the pond, was a quiet, natural setting just right for the reflection and contemplation that would go on at Seton Cove.

Sr. Sharon and a committee of about 10 others representing the hospital and general contractor were extensively involved throughout the process, particularly in picking the location and siting the building. We took many walks through the woods at different times of day to observe the sunlight from all angles, listen to traffic noises, and watch the wildlife in the trees and around the pond.

It was critical to let the people who come to Seton Cove know immediately that they're entering an atmosphere very different from the hustle and bustle of the hospital. So the building was set 450 feet back from the nearest road, and a driveway and walking paths were cut through the woods. The drive has gentle curves, which have the effect of slowing traffic and the pace of visitors. It allowed most beautiful trees along the way to be retained. Visitors pass under a restful canopy of these tall trees and emerge into a wide clearing.

### The Building

The same sense of discovery that one receives when emerging into the clearing is carried through in the 14,000-square-foot building. From the outside, the two-story structure has the familiar and comfortable form of a large house, with one-story "breezeways" connecting different wings to the main part of the building. The effect is to mask the bulk of the structure—an observer never sees the entire building from any angle.

Exterior materials and landscaping



*Seton Cove Spirituality Center: "An observer never sees the entire building from any angle."*

reinforce the home-like feel. The building's façade is a mixture of rich red brick (with colored mortar) and soft yellow siding. Windows are trimmed in white, doors are painted forest green. Daylilies, hostas, and ornamental grasses are planted in the flowerbeds hugging the foundation. Wooden park benches sit on the front porch and in the woods surrounding the building.

### The Interior

The interior of Seton Cove keeps with the theme of discovery and inspiration. Visitors walk into an entryway with stairs leading to the second floor. A necessary commercial elevator is tucked behind a door and down a short hall so it's easy to reach but not immediately visible.

Off the entrance hall is a small library, with a wall of windows looking into the woods; and the main meeting room, which looks back over the retention pond. A door from the main meeting room opens onto a small sun porch filled with patio furniture. The residential-like kitchen, adjacent to the meeting room, has a breakfast nook, center island work area, cooktop, oven, microwave and refrigerator.

Two small breezeways lead from a hallway behind the kitchen to

two, two-story wings that each contain 10 small sleeping rooms. The rooms are simple, furnished with just a bed, desk and chair. The overnight rooms, used for multi-day programs of spiritual renewal, are located on the north end of the building, protected from direct light by dense trees.

At the south end of the main floor sits a small chapel that can accommodate up to 30 people. Large windows on three sides let the morning and afternoon sun stream into the space. They also let those participating in services look out into the restful woods.

The second floor of the main building is a large "attic" meeting room furnished with comfortable groupings of sofas and chairs. Huge arched windows let light into the space and frame several cushioned window seats that are perfect niches in which to curl up and quietly read or think.

Throughout Seton Cove, interior finishes reinforce the theme of quiet and rest. Furniture is upholstered in shades and patterns of nature—greens and browns, leaves and flowers. The table and chairs in the breakfast nook are maple and white. A small fountain bubbles over rocks in a corner of the entryway.

From the client's perspective, Sr. Sharon says that the building is just what she wanted to achieve.

"There is an integrity about the architecture and how it is used," she says. "The form itself has become the message we want to send." □



*Seton Cove Spirituality Center interior: "discovery and inspiration."*



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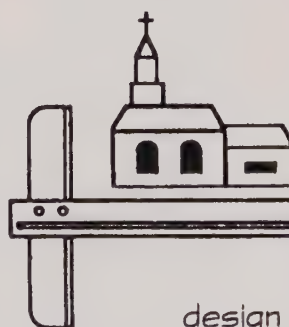
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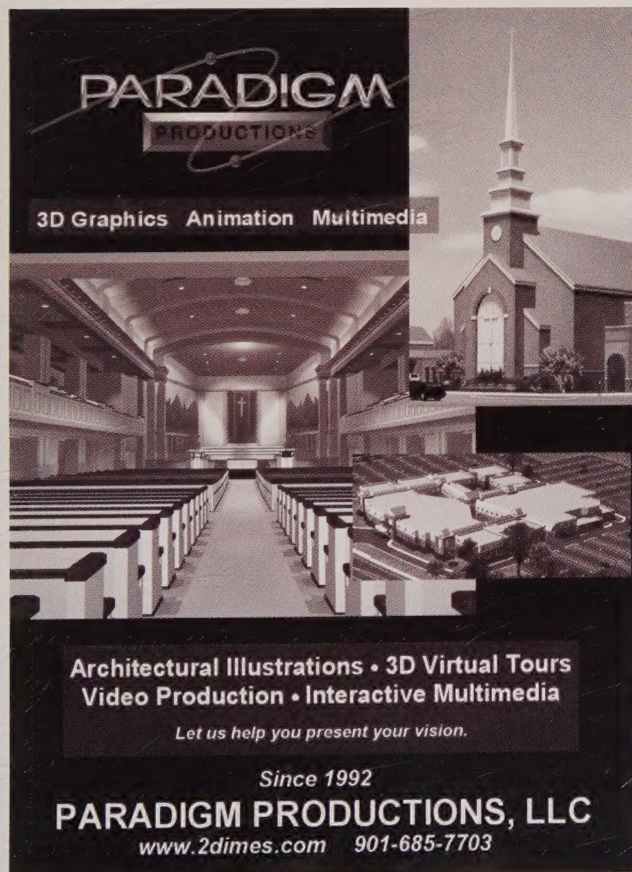
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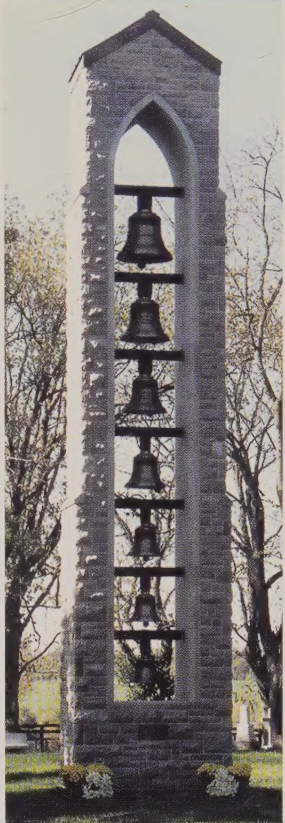
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